

Message Text

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46

ACTION ARA-20

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TAGS: PLAB CVIS BF

SUBJ: BAHAMIAN ENTERTAINERS SEEK US RECIPROCITY

SUMMARY: DUKE HANNA, PRESIDENT OF BAHAMAS MUSICIANS AND ENTERTAINERS UNION, HAS ANNOUNCED THAT GCOB MINISTRY OF LABOR RECENTLY AGREED TO STOP ISSUING WORK PERMITS TO US ENTERTAINERS PENDING RESOLUTION OF DISPUTE BETWEEN THE UNION AND THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS. HANNA CLAIMS THAT, WHILE US ENTERTAINERS WORK FREELY IN THE BAHAMAS, UNION AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE AFM AND HOTELS IN THE US PREVENT BAHAMIAN ENTERTAINERS FROM RECEIVING RECIPROCAL TREATMENT. HANNA SAYS THAT HE AND HAL DAVIS, HEAD OF AFM, WILL MEET IN NASSAU DURING OCTOBER TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO HANNA, ISSUE HAS BEEN BREWING FOR TWO OR THREE YEARS. HE SAYS HOTEL CHAINS REPRESENTED IN THE BAHAMAS ARE WILLING TO AGREE TO SEND BAHAMIANS TO ENTERTAIN IN THEIR US BRANCHES FOR "RESIDENCY EMPLOYMENT" (I.E. BOOKINGS OF TWO NIGHTS OR MORE) IN EXCHANGE FOR IMPORTATION OF US TALENT ON AN EQUAL BASIS, BUT CLAIMS THAT AFM BLOCKS SUCH MOVES BY REQUIRING THAT A US UNION MEMBER BE HIRED BY US EMPLOYERS FOR EVERY NON-AMERICAN APPEARING IN THE US, EVEN IF THE FORMER DOES NOT ACTUALLY APPEAR ON STAGE. APPARENTLY AFM DOES NOT OBJECT TO ONE-NIGHT-STANDS.

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2. HANNA SAYS ON AUGUST 14 LABOR MINISTER DARLINE MET WITH BAHAMIAN UNION OFFICIALS AND HOTEL OWNERS AND AGREED TO PUT A "HOLD" ON FURTHER ISSUANCE OF WORK PERMITS TO US ENTERTAINERS UNTIL THE BILATERAL UNION DISPUTE IS WORKED OUT BY THE PARTIES. HANNA REPORTS HE INFORMED DAVIS OF DARLING'S DECISION AND THAT AFM LEADER IMMEDIATELY PROPOSED AN OCTOBER MEETING WITH HANNA TO RESOLVE THE MATTER.

3. (NOTE: ON AUGUST 12, LOCAL HOTEL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE CONTACTED EMBASSY, OUTLINED THE SITUATION AND ASKED WHETHER THE EMBASSY KNEW OF ANY US GOVERNMENT POLICY AGAINST BRINGING BAHAMIAN ENTERTAINERS INTO THE US. SINCE HE REQUESTED AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE, EMBASSY COULD ONLY GIVE PRELIMINARY VIEW THAT, GIVEN USUAL VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR MUSICIANS WORKING IN THE US, EMBASSY KNEW OF NO SUCH POLICY. EMBASSY SUSPECTS, HOWEVER, THAT HANNA'S CLAIM OF AFM RESTRICTION ON EMPLOYMENT OF NON-AMERICAN ENTERTAINERS IN THE US MAY BE THE RESULT OF CONFUSION CONCERNING PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL OF H-1 OR H-2 PETITIONS BY INS. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT H-2 APPROVAL ENTAILS CERTIFICATION BY LOCAL REGIONAL MANPOWER OFFICE THAT EMPLOYMENT OF ALIEN WILL NOT DISPLACE US CITIZENS READY, WILLING AND ABLE TO TAKE JOB, AND THAT LOCAL UNIONS MAY HAVE SOME INPUT INTO THIS CERTIFICATION. DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS ON THIS PRACTICE REQUESTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO ASSIST IN RESPONDING TO FURTHER QUERIES.

4. COMMENT: HANNA'S STRONG REACTION TO THIS ISSUE REFLECTS PRESSURES CURRENTLY BEING FELT BY BAHAMIAN ENTERTAINERS WHO, AFFECTED BY HOTEL CUT-BACKS, CRUISE SHIPS BRINGING THEIR OWN SOURCES OF ENTERTAINMENT AND PACKAGE GROUPS PREFERRING CASINO GAMBLING TO NIGHT-CLUBBING, ARE FACING SOME HARD TIMES.
SPIERS

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